



Southeast  
Neighborhood  
School of  
Excellence

To Be Located in the Near Southeast Neighborhood  
2025 East English Avenue  
Indianapolis, Indiana



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## Charter Applicant Information Sheet

**Name of proposed school:**

Southeast Neighborhood School of Excellence, Inc.

**Location of the school:**

2025 East English Avenue

**School District location:**

Indianapolis Public Schools

The proposed school will open in the fall of school year:      X 2004 – 05

**Proposed Grade Levels & Total Student Enrollment**

	Grade Levels	Total Student Enrollment
First Year	K – 3	160
Second Year	K – 4	200
Third Year	K – 5	240
Fourth Year	K – 5	240
Fifth Year	K – 5	240
Sixth Year	K – 5	240
Seventh Year	K – 5	240
Maximum	K – 5	240

Are you planning to work with an educational management organization (EMO)? NO

Have you submitted this application to another sponsor? NO

Do you plan to submit this application to another sponsor before the Mayor of Indianapolis makes a final determination on your application? NO



## Executive Summary

The Near Southeast Neighborhood of Indianapolis has suffered from many decades of decline and neglect, not unlike other core communities surrounding downtown. The 1960s and 70s in particular were a time of horrible disruption. The construction of the interstate system destroyed thousands of southeast homes, hundreds of businesses, and many key schools and churches, while cutting a unified neighborhood into isolated pockets. This devastation compounded by the nationwide effects of suburban flight and disinvestment in urban areas, resulted in a rapid decline in neighborhood population and a crippling loss of wealth and stability. Residents working out of the Southeast Multi-Service Center declared arrest on this downward spiral and began leading community renewal projects. In 1983, the group formalized efforts by incorporating the Fountain Square & Fletcher Place Investment Corporation. At the same time, a second movement grew out of neighborhood churches to form the Fountain Square Church & Community Project, which attracted hundreds of volunteers from around the region to rebuild affordable homes. Years later, these groups merged under the name of Southeast Neighborhood Development, but the vision of these volunteers remained constant and flowered into the tangible transformation of this community.

Southeast Neighborhood Development (SEND), the sponsor of this application, is a nonprofit community development corporation created and governed by its residents to revitalize the near southeast side of Indianapolis and to enhance the quality of life of its diverse spectrum of residents. Since 1991, SEND has invested more than \$26 Million into improvements in affordable housing, commercial renovation, youth development, parks and green space improvements. Transforming deteriorated houses into quality homes has always been at the center of SEND's vision. This has resulted in the creation and renovation of over 600 affordable homeownership and rental opportunities for area families. SEND has also demonstrated that an organized effort to attract economic development back into the inner city can be successful. SEND has rebuilt six major commercial buildings, now occupied by a mix of retail, library, office, restaurant, artist studios, entertainment venues, and affordable apartments. These physical improvements have attracted and served various market niches, resulting in a reborn commercial district. Additionally, well over 300 youth received intense training in building their technical skills as they joined in the redevelopment of their community. These accomplishments have been the result of many partnerships with government, corporations, foundations, and other non-profits, yet they were all initiated and directed by community residents who banded together to improve their own neighborhood.

This effort – the **Southeast Neighborhood School of Excellence (SENSE)** is no exception and is yet another success story of southeast leaders and activists joining together to address issues facing their community, this time as it relates to education. Although the neighborhood has reversed the course of decline on many fronts, it still faces significant challenges. There is a widespread tradition of work in the building and manufacturing trades, but these jobs are vanishing quickly. The majority of residents have not graduated from high school and are living on incomes far below the Indianapolis median income. This is reflected in the fact that the southeast side has the lowest educational attainment levels in the city and the rate is not improving as current students drop out in numbers similar to their parents. Recognizing that a quality new school can be a highly effective– if not *the* most powerful – economic development engine for a community, southeast residents are making it happen.

The community has voiced a need for additional educational support and has suffered from a lack of immediacy and response to this demand, fostering frustration and resentment for many years. A recent historical narrative of the Southeast side written by The Polis Center validated this sentiment. The research showed that a critical theme emerging across the communities within the Southeast catchment area was that residents expressed a sense that their community has been the “neglected – and sometimes abused – stepchild of this city”. The neighborhood is tired of being seen as only “good enough” for vocational training and wants access to a rich and engaging educational experience – one that they can call their own. Southeast residents refuse to accept ‘less’ any longer and are organizing a neighborhood-based school that will allow families to finally become economically sufficient instead of continuing as the second class citizens they often feel labeled.

A community-based school can support families in the endeavors to see that children gain sound content knowledge and develop important life skills so that all can have bright and promising futures. This was the crux of the historical “neighborhood” school. For seventy years, the Indianapolis public school system was structured and run on the

principle that “the best interests of the pupils and the parents are served by relatively small neighborhood elementary schools” (Indianapolis Board of School Commissioners, 1935).<sup>1</sup> Southeast residents clearly remember when this was the case, when their neighborhood schools functioned as the center for education and social activities. Now many of these historic school buildings stand vacant and dilapidated, reminding the community of the anchors they once were. SENSE will resurrect this model again, using the following as its mission: “SENSE will be a community-driven elementary school nurturing academic excellence, social development and civic responsibility in every individual.”

After passage of Indiana’s charter legislation in 2001, the resident-based board of SEND unanimously voted to initiate community exploration into the appropriateness and feasibility of creating a school through the charter process. A charter school provided that exclusive opportunity to recreate a truly independent neighborhood school, tailored to the needs of the near southeast side of Indianapolis. SEND discussed this desire with the Annie E. Casey Foundation representatives who then agreed to support this organizing effort with a seed grant. The Southeast residents, businesses, churches, and service organizations began holding a series of planning meetings to discuss the educational needs and opportunities for neighborhood children and their families. Throughout the community there was overall support for the creation of a neighborhood elementary school, providing its students with a solid foundation. During the discussions, everyone acknowledged the need to start as early as possible – that southeast’s children are lost from the start. The public school teachers participating in the roundtable discussions stressed that many students from this neighborhood drop out in junior high – before even entering high school. This continued to reinforce the need to begin with a strong elementary school option.

### **Educational Foundation and Curricular Approach**

The founders of SENSE believe that the mission of this school translates into an organization eager to take on ultimate responsibility for teaching its students and ensuring their success. In this way, student achievement will not be put off on others, but will be assumed as the charge of SENSE – without excuses. However, a unique community requires a unique approach to learning. Most instructional strategies have not been consistently effective or compelling enough to entice residents and encourage them to stay in school. There is a need for a powerful and interactive curriculum that connects students with the bigger picture, equips them for long-term success, yet meets them where they are in a very personal and culturally relevant manner.

The overarching goals for SENSE are encapsulated in the vision statement for the school:

“The Southeast Neighborhood School of Excellence will graduate students with the academic, social, and civic building blocks for a promising future. SENSE will embody a school culture of excellence, inclusion, and enthusiasm. SENSE will be a strong educational institution that anchors the southeast side and contributes to strong families and neighborhood pride.”

Research reveals that, given the right support mechanisms, all children can excel academically regardless of socioeconomic status. This is particularly evident when marginalized children are successfully impacted before the third grade. SENSE is committed to making this a reality for its students. Through a concerted effort, SENSE aims to attract families most often disconnected and disenfranchised and help their children realize their true scholastic and individual potential.

The SENSE curriculum will equip students with a back-to-basics approach with strong emphasis on the areas of reading, writing and math, incorporating social development and civic responsibility skills. SENSE will foster an environment that encourages and nurtures a child’s instinctual desire to learn, honoring the principle that every child can learn and excel. SENSE will utilize the successful Core Knowledge curriculum to bring this to the community. Core Knowledge is a proven educational program that provides a solid core curriculum in order to help children establish strong foundations of knowledge, grade by grade. However, basic skills will not be taught in isolation, but learned in the context of appropriate application. SENSE will supplement Core Knowledge with innovative instructional strategies that will allow teachers to develop a learning environment that addresses the specific

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<sup>1</sup> “Public Schools & the Neighborhood Life-Cycle.” Glory June Greiff with Tim Maher and Douglas A. Dunn. Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana (1985).

interests, needs and learning characteristics of its students (recognizing different learning strengths and individual intelligences).<sup>2</sup>

Additionally, as a true neighborhood school, the SENSE educational program will utilize the community as a laboratory for learning. The near southeast side of Indianapolis is an extremely unique community made up of densely-populated, historic cluster of neighborhoods which have housed a mix of ethnic groups, residences, commercial establishments and manufacturers since the 1860s. The area has been home to significant Italian, Eastern European, Irish, German, Jewish, and African American ethnic groups for over one hundred years. Since the 1920s, it has become closely identified with newcomers from the Appalachian Mountains, gaining its identification as one of several “pockets of Appalachian Communities”<sup>3</sup> and more recently is home to a significant and growing Hispanic community, which has increased in ten years from less than 1% to over 10% of total neighborhood population. This distinct makeup offers rich opportunity for SENSE to involve the community and have economic, social, family and cultural components that enhance learning. Community themes and appreciation will be woven into the SENSE curriculum, instilling pride and commitment to neighborhood empowerment and engagement.

### **Partnerships**

SENSE has established a wide base of support throughout the community. The University of Indianapolis and the Annie E. Casey Foundation have selected the community as one in which they will invest long-term. SENSE is working together with these organizations as well as with partners such as Indy Reads and the Adult Center for Education (ACE) to implement job training and family literacy programs. SEND will provide homeownership training to SENSE parents. Other collaborations are under development with Garfield Park, Girls Inc., Lilly Boys & Girls Club, Fountain Square Public Library, the Hispanic Education Center, St. Francis Hospital and the National Institute for Fitness and Sports.

### **Organizational Viability and Leadership Capacity**

Through the work over the past year and a half, SENSE established a strong foundation for long-term sustainability. This commenced with the recruitment of a Task Force and then a Board of Directors consisting of neighborhood leaders, corporate and nonprofit executives, and educators. The board and committee membership includes a diverse group of individuals that bring important expertise and influence to this effort. The board and its individual members are charged with upholding and overseeing fulfillment of the mission and purpose of the Southeast Neighborhood School of Excellence. The board of directors will ultimately be accountable for the performance of the school and will have the ability to make changes to the school to ensure that we are appropriately meeting the needs of the SENSE families.

SENSE plans to open fall, 2004 and will begin with a manageable size (offering K – 3 in year one) and add two more classes each year ending with grade five. Maximum student enrollment (240) will not exceed the National Small Schools Movement definition (less than 300 in total), but at the same time be large enough to sustain operations. SENSE will be very deliberate in the recruitment process to attract the families most disenfranchised, those who have given up on education, and those that have difficulty connecting education with eventual wealth, by offering a quality educational option that families can call their own.

Southeast Neighborhood Development as the sponsor of SENSE currently serves as the fiscal agent. SEND has a proven track record in managing multi-million dollar project budgets and maintains a healthy nonprofit financial rating as rated by their funders and lenders in Indianapolis. SENSE intends to continue the contractual relationship with SEND for financial management through the first year of operation. SENSE is also partnering with SEND to secure the school facility. SEND is purchasing a 73,000 s.f. warehouse located at 2025 English Avenue. This building will be converted to house at least two new schools and will be able to offer affordable space specifically designed for SENSE needs. This Charter School Center will allow for efficiencies of scale by creating shared resources for multiple schools. The building is on 5.8 acres of land, allowing for expansion, recreational space, and parking.

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<sup>2</sup> Guild, P. & S. Chock-Eng. (1998, March) *Multiple Intelligences, Learning Styles, Brain-Based Education: Where do the messages overlap? Schools in the Middle*. NASSP.

<sup>3</sup> The neighborhood was identified as such in the report, “The Appalachian In Indianapolis”. The Historical Narrative of the Southeast Side written by The Polis Center also identified that a second recurring theme for the area was the large inhabitation of families from Appalachia.



## I. Our Vision

### A. Mission Statement

*Southeast Neighborhood School of Excellence, Inc. is a community-driven elementary school that nurtures academic excellence, social development and civic responsibility in every individual.*

This mission statement is the synthesis of the community visioning process for the SENSE school. The Southeast Neighborhood School Task Force, a group consisting of over 40 neighborhood stakeholders, volunteered their time at numerous planning sessions to focus on the exact strategy and approach the school would take based upon the community input process. The task force compiled the community responses into a name, acronym, and mission statement for the school. The mission statement intends to capture the intent that not only the students will learn, but parents, teachers, and the community together, will be able to utilize this educational institution as a center of learning and excellence for all. Attachment III is a graphic with the full Vision which includes a description of what the school will embody for each key stakeholder group including, students, parents, teachers, and the school as a whole.

### B. Need

#### ***A Neighborhood School: An Innovative Way to Target Unique Community Challenges***

Indiana's historically strong manufacturing base has for generations provided high wage employment opportunities requiring lower levels of education. However, it is becoming increasingly difficult to obtain quality jobs without strong technical and reading skills. Southeast residents have traditionally worked in the area factories that did not require a high school education.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, those living in this geographical area have the lowest educational attainment levels in the city. Many residents now face limited sustainable career opportunities, binding them to subsistence wages. Less than half of adults in the southeast catchment area have a high school diploma and this attainment rate is not improving with current students who drop out in similar numbers as their parents. Literacy rates are very low and for many families, education has not been a primary goal. In fact, there is a prevalent 'anti-education' sentiment in the area.

Given these facts, the SE community faces a clear and urgent educational crisis and has in turn, elevated education to the highest priority of community planning and programming. For the neighborhood to truly experience revitalization, residents knew they had to demand the absolute best for their children and that overall educational attainment levels must improve. Residents felt that their "children are lost from the get go" and insisted on the creation of a quality elementary school that would lay a solid foundation for high school graduation and beyond.

Stakeholders knew this task required enormous ingenuity, due in part to the unique composition of the Southeast side. Children growing up in this area face an economic and demographic environment entirely different from any other Indianapolis community. The Southeast neighborhood, originally settled by Germans, Eastern Europeans and Italians, began to see a large influx of natives from the Mountains of Appalachia, migrating to Indianapolis for employment at various times throughout the 1900s.<sup>2</sup> This presence remains very strong today. In addition to a comparatively smaller (representing 13%) but consistently strong and vibrant African American community, the neighborhood continues to experience integration and has also become one key locale for the growing Indianapolis Latino community. The Latino population in the SE area has increased ten-fold since 1990 (Growing from less than 1% to 13%). Nevertheless, children are educated through a curriculum approved by a School Board charged with the most difficult task of concurrently serving all the different backgrounds and circumstances within the Indianapolis Public School System. Recognizing that a "one-size-fits-all" approach is not consistently effective, nor has it proven

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<sup>1</sup> The boundaries of the Southeast neighborhood have historically been, Washington Street to the north, Sherman Street to the east, Raymond Street to the south and Meridian/Madison to the west.

<sup>2</sup> Greater Southeast History. Report by the Polis Center at Indiana University Purdue University at Indianapolis.



to be compelling or attractive enough for many residents on the near southeast side that drop out at very young ages, a community-spawned, neighborhood charter school emerged.

With numerous partners working together, the intent was to create a quality new school that would add to other local efforts to address the education issues facing the area. The goal in starting the school was not to take away from the traditional public or private schools, because the neighborhood groups work closely with them as well to help build the community, but to provide another option – a unique laboratory – for trying new approaches to learning and building family assets. In this way, successful instructional concepts for disenfranchised students modeled at SENSE could later be adopted by neighboring schools. It was also immensely attractive that the Board of Directors of a charter school would permit neighborhood representation and would be accountable for performance and could exercise the ability to make adjustments to the school over time, ensuring that SENSE appropriately meets the needs of the enrolled families and students.

### **Neighborhood Demand**

Before coming to the conclusion that the neighborhood would seek a charter, the demand and desire for this school was discussed and analyzed throughout the community. An intensive community organizing process was spearheaded by Southeast Neighborhood Development (SEND), the sponsoring organization, and resident leaders. SEND initiated the exploration through interviews, public meetings, surveys, data analysis, and focus groups to determine the demand and level of desire for a neighborhood-based charter school. The broad group of contacts included resident parents, neighborhood leaders, neighborhood associations, service providers, faith-based organizations, health representatives, area business owners, area principals and teachers. Of those surveyed, ninety-eight percent (98%) of respondents agreed that: *“more quality public schools would contribute to the comprehensive revitalization of the Southeast side”* and agreed with the statement: *“I support establishing a neighborhood-based charter school for the Southeast side.”*<sup>3</sup> A compiled list of over 125 interested organizations and individuals resulted. Out of this group, a Neighborhood Task Force was formed.

After several planning meetings to help narrow the focus of the demand, the resounding community recommendation was for an elementary school. The community wanted to build a neighborhood school that would effectively equip students with the necessary knowledge base and foundation to stay and excel in school. The other top recommendations included that the school provide a back-to-basics education with an extra dose of math, reading and writing in particular. The next most frequent recommendation was to consider how to serve the various special needs in the neighborhood. The neighborhood felt that there is a high level of special needs students (particularly learning disabilities, but also including mental, social, and physical exceptionalities) and the community wanted the school to keep this as a priority. The task force and board of directors built the SENSE model with this goal in the forefront of all curriculum and school decisions. Additionally, the desire for a bilingual school (English/Spanish) was expressed. The use of language to reinforce the importance of inclusion and acceptance was viewed as an excellent way to increase communication and connections between SE's diverse neighbors.

### **Area Schools and Statistics**

In the SE catchment area there are three public middle schools, six elementary schools and two public high schools, however, these schools serve students from throughout Indianapolis.<sup>4</sup> One out of every three SE children is bused to other public schools throughout Marion County.<sup>5</sup> In addition there are seven, small faith-based schools that charge tuition and two charter schools in close proximity. However, less than 1% of students are enrolled in the private schools and only about sixteen families were admitted to the two charters. The private, magnet and charter schools have waiting lists and only a few of the private schools provide financial aid or scholarships.

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<sup>3</sup> Sixty-six residents completed a written survey. The rest of the input process was through neighborhood meetings and roundtable discussions. Reports available upon request. Two community organizations were already in the process of seeking a charter and those groups also helped inform this initiative.

<sup>4</sup> The two high schools, Arsenal Tech and Manual are near the SE boundaries.

<sup>5</sup> Additionally, according to the most recent census, 30% of those 16 – 18 years of age are not in school in the SE area at all

Typical household incomes are very low on the southeast side. Families frequently have to rely on some form of assistance to make ends meet and are rarely in a position to provide for a private education. More than one out of every four families lives in complete poverty and the unemployment rate is double that of Indianapolis. Even those families able to live above the poverty level still earn significantly less than the \$61,000 average household income for Indianapolis as a whole.<sup>6</sup>

Growing up in poverty negatively impacts the educational experiences and resources available to children and their families, yet research continues to reveal that, given the right support mechanisms, all children can excel academically regardless of socioeconomic status. This is particularly evident when marginalized children are successfully impacted before the third grade. The Southeast Neighborhood School of Excellence is committed to providing this kind of learning environment. Through a concerted effort, SENSE aims to attract families most often disconnected, distrustful and disenchanted by educational institutions to help their children realize their true scholastic and individual potential in a personal and tailored way – one they identify as their own.

### C. Goals

The overarching goals for SENSE are encapsulated in the vision statement for the school:

*The Southeast Neighborhood School of Excellence will graduate students with the academic, social, and civic building blocks for a promising future. SENSE will embody a school culture of excellence, inclusion, and enthusiasm. SENSE will have a reputation that others replicate. SENSE will be a strong educational institution that anchors the southeast side and contributes to strong families and neighborhood pride.*

The priority goals in each of the following areas are directly related to the SENSE vision and goals outlined by the community (See Attachment III). Furthermore:

- *Academically, we envision a school that fosters Academic Success, Academic Inclusion, and Academic Enthusiasm.*
- *Specific to the SENSE school we envision a school that creates a strong sense of community through Community Connectedness and Stakeholder Enthusiasm.*
- *In order for SENSE to fulfill its mission and vision it must also be organizationally viable and sustainable which includes Community Participation in Governance, and Sound Financial/Fiscal Practices and Oversight.*

### ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE:

Academic Success: SENSE students will perform at or above grade level in reading and math by the third grade, or at the conclusion of two consecutive years in attendance at the SENSE school. Research affirms that students that are struggling by the third grade are more likely to fall further and further behind in school, have higher retention rates (failing a grade) in upper elementary, middle and high school and ultimately be more likely to dropout, while students of comparable backgrounds who are at or above grade level by the third grade are more likely to be successful through their school years. ISTEP test scores in area grade schools indicate that many students are already behind by the third grade.<sup>7</sup> The SENSE educational program is designed to meet both the needs of students who enter the school with grade level and above skills (so they excel academically) and those who enter the school below grade level, including students who enter the school with no preliteracy skills. Early identification of struggling and special

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<sup>6</sup> The median income for the SE area is half that of Marion County. These statistics were collected and analyzed with assistance from the Local Learning Partnership (LLP), a collaboration with the City of Indianapolis, Annie E. Casey Foundation, University of Indianapolis, the Indianapolis Neighborhood Resource Center and the SE Neighborhood. Reports available upon request.

<sup>7</sup> This extends into the upper grades where the test scores indicate significant inefficiencies in junior high and high school.

needs students, instructional methods designed to bridge any academic gaps, and a strong curriculum will be used to ensure that students meet this goal.

*Measurement:* Data used to measure SENSE's success on this goal include standardized tests (NWEA, and I-STEP pass rates), and the evaluation of student academic progress through the grades. SENSE expects students to demonstrate annual gains in reading and math for all students (based on the NWEA test), and a decrease in the size of the achievement gap for students who pretest below grade level. SENSE will use first year test scores as the beginning benchmark for future years level of improvement. After the first year, SENSE expects the number of third graders who have attended the school for two or more consecutive years to test at or above grade level on the NWEA, and the percentage of students who pass the ISTEP tests to increase by 10% compared to the previous years performance. This annual improvement will reflect the length of time students, families, and teachers have been involved in the school and continued school improvement efforts to increase instructional effectiveness. The school expects to see, at least, this level of gain from the previous year until the school exceeds the performance of comparable schools and/or meets the state average. The same level of growth is expected for students who enter the school at second grade or above, after two consecutive years of enrollment. Because there is a connection between weaker skills and higher retention rates at the upper elementary grades, SENSE will also look longitudinally at students attending the school over a period of three or more years with the expectation of lower retention rates at the upper elementary grades (4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade) compared to similar schools.

Academic Inclusion: SENSE affirms the benefits of meeting all students academic needs in an inclusive atmosphere, where students of varied skill levels and strengths work together, and all make positive academic progress. The school will use research-based methods and strategies to differentiate instruction where appropriate, and to individualize students' educational programs. At the early grades SENSE will adopt strategies and approaches that have been successful with similar student populations. For example, because research shows that extended time on task (e.g., reading and/or math activities) has a positive correlation on student achievement, rather than relying on homework in the early grades, SENSE will provide an educational program with extended time in these areas – during the school day.<sup>8</sup> As such, all students will benefit. SENSE will provide a longer school year for its students and the SENSE school day will also be longer allowing for increased instructional time.

*Measurement:* Data used to measure this goal will include a review of student participation in regular classroom instruction to study whether all students are accessing the primary educational programs of the school, and to quantify the amount of time students requiring special services spend, on average, receiving instruction in the regular classroom setting. In addition, test scores (NWEA, I-STEP) will be disaggregated on several dimensions to compare academic progress of different student groups within the school (e.g., comparing the size of student gains identified as “struggling” compared to the general student body) with the goal of comparable gains for all students.

Academic Enthusiasm: SENSE intends to instill in students a positive attitude towards learning, student self-confidence, and an overall predisposition for working towards academic excellence in higher grades. Because one of the local challenges for this neighborhood school is a long-term community culture that has not placed a high value on acquiring education, the SENSE school believes that a primary mission of the school is to build within students, their families, and the community a perception that these students *deserve* the opportunities afforded to individuals with a college education, and instill an orientation, even in the early grades, towards the pursuit of higher education.

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<sup>8</sup> SENSE will require minimal homework assignments, due to the extremely low literacy levels and educational attainment of area families. Reliance on homework thus may begin to separate student performance depending on parent involvement and educational attainment at early elementary grades. Studies have shown that unlike junior high and high school, “homework has no discernible effect on students' achievement in the elementary grades” Black, Susan. *The Truth about Homework*. American School Board Journal v183 n10 p48-51 Oct 1996.

*Measurement:* Because “enthusiasm” is not a measurable goal, SENSE will develop several qualitative instruments (e.g., surveys, check off lists, observations, interviews) to capture indicators that would reflect “enthusiasm” by looking over time - across a school year, across multiple school years to measure “change.” Indicators of ‘enthusiasm’ would include: student preparedness for class (having materials, completed work on time, etc.); student attendance rates; student participation in class (e.g., the number of students that ‘volunteer’ to participate in discussions or take leadership roles in group work); family involvement in the school (number participating, range of types of participation); extracurricular participation in activities that have more of an academic focus (e.g., when students ‘select’ after school activities, is there an increase in participation in those program offerings that have an academic focus).

### **SCHOOL SPECIFIC GOALS:**

Community Connectedness: From its inception the SENSE initiative has been rooted in the community, and its development has depended upon community participation and buy-in. The vision for the school goes much further, however, than community input into the formation of the school. In its operation the school must be inclusive, integrated and connected to the community in all aspects of the school – from recruitment of diverse and mixed income households, to program offerings to families and the community that are beyond the traditional school, to program collaborations with existing community organizations serving the neighborhood. The school should become a community hub and a center for learning and be recognized as such by the neighborhood. The SENSE school envisions reaching this goal through programmatic offerings and community collaborations (e.g., service learning). For example, the school will be open in the evening and on the weekend for adult classes, community and school programs. SENSE is committed to workforce development by not only offering adult classes, but through a commitment to employing residents, parents, and alumni at SENSE. A job progression program is under development that will allow residents to develop their skills as classroom aids, tutors, office assistants and eventually as instructors and principals.<sup>9</sup> The SENSE school will work with organizations such as Indy Reads and the Fletcher Place Adult Center for Education (ACE) to implement job training and family literacy programs on site.

SENSE will directly connect its students and the education program of the school to the community through service learning partnerships that will involve the implementation of educationally relevant projects that take place on-site at various community organizations that work for neighborhood improvement and promote civic responsibility. These projects will help students and their families become more strongly connected to their community and help develop a sense of neighborhood pride. Service learning partnerships will include reflection components enabling all participants to learn to be a part of establishing goals, objectives, and projects together. This will provide an avenue for SENSE students to understand and share in the development of their own community initiatives and help the area to grow future leaders.

*Measurement:* This goal will be measured by several factors that consider the number of community partnerships, the nature of those partnerships (how substantial are the program offerings, what is the community participation in those programs, are the programs related to education), and how broadly those partnerships reach into different segments of the community (i.e., diversity of the organizations and their missions). To measure the scope and reach of these partnerships, surveys of students’ families will be used to measure awareness, participation, and perceived effectiveness of these programs. Additionally community surveys may be administered through partner organizations to measure the perception of community connectedness of the SENSE school.

Stakeholder Enthusiasm: Through the SENSE visioning process, where broad community input was sought and synthesized into a vision of the school, a strong sense of ‘enthusiasm’ among students, families, faculty, and the community was a recurring theme. This ‘enthusiasm’ would indicate a strong buy-in to both the mission of the school and a willingness to support that mission, and personal satisfaction for those directly involved in the school. While

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<sup>9</sup> SENSE will follow the provisions required by the Federal No Child Left Behind Act in terms of educational requirements for specific positions within the school.

this focus on 'enthusiasm' would be beneficial to any school, as a community-based school that has evolved out of the interest in the community, this goal ensures that the school continues to be responsive to the interests and needs of the community.

*Measurement:* Stakeholder Enthusiasm will be measured for various groups: students, parents/families, faculty, and community organizations. SENSE will be a school in which parents/families desire to send their children. This will be demonstrated by the existence of a waiting list, by student enrollment retention (students enrolled one year are enrolled the next year) of 80% or higher, and surveys of parents/families will indicate a high satisfaction level with the school. SENSE will be a school where teachers desire to teach and where teachers demonstrate a high degree of job satisfaction. This will be measured by the number of highly qualified applicants that apply for each available teaching position, by job satisfaction surveys, and by an annual retention rate of 80% or higher. SENSE will be a school where students want to attend. This will be measured by attendance rates that either start and remain high, or increase over time, and rates that over time exceed those in similar traditional public schools, and by student satisfaction surveys. SENSE will be an asset to the southeast community. This will be documented by the number and quality of significant partnerships, by neighborhood and parent/family representation on boards and committees, and by surveys.

#### **Organizational Viability:**

Community Participation in Governance: Over the past year and a half, SENSE has already established a strong foundation for long-term sustainability. This commenced with the recruitment of a Task Force and the development of a Board of Directors consisting of strong community leaders and professionals. The effectiveness of the school over time will depend upon staying true to the vision of the school in which the school remains responsive to community interests and is able to adapt external programs to meet community needs. This will require a continued commitment to shared decision-making, selecting leaders with direct ties to the community, and a commitment to placing committed community members and parents/family representatives on the board and committees overseeing all school initiatives (See Attachment V).

*Measurement:* This will be measured by documentation of participation and membership of the Board of Directors and school committees that are involved in programmatic decisions for the school. The effectiveness of the Board and its members will be measured through self-evaluations and school assessments.

Sound Financial/Fiscal Practices and Oversight: SENSE recognizes that a charter school, especially through its startup phase, is both a nonprofit organization and a public school. As such the board sets high priority in developing and following procedures that ensure long-term fiscal viability. SENSE will follow generally accepted accounting practices and will comply with all laws and regulations governing charter schools. The SENSE Board will play the primary role in financial strategic planning (including determining annual and long term fundraising needs), budgetary review, and fiscal oversight in order to provide the school leadership with assurance that the school has the money it needs and provide the public with the assurance that public dollars are spent responsibly. SENSE expects to place a CPA in the role of Board Treasurer to report regularly to the Board about current financial status and fiscal policy compliance.

*Measurement:* This will be measured by review of fiscal policies, the implementation of standardized internal control systems, and demonstration of the adherence to generally accepted accounting principles and the Indiana State Board of Accounts. A clean annual audit, Certificate of Good Standing, and clear chart of accounts will also serve to document the attainment of this goal. Additional documentation to assess SENSE's achievement of this goal will be the adoption, adherence and periodic review/revisions of strategic plans containing financial, programmatic and other targets consistent with the SENSE mission.

## II. Who We Are

### A. Founding Group

SENSE is the result of a variety of organizations and individuals working together over the past two years. After passage of Indiana's charter legislation in 2001, the resident-based board of **Southeast Neighborhood Development** (SEND), the sponsoring organization, unanimously voted to initiate community exploration into the appropriateness and feasibility of creating a neighborhood-based school through the charter process.<sup>10</sup> SEND was established in 1983 and is a community-based development organization working to revitalize the southeast side through housing, economic development and other supportive programs. SEND's President discussed this desire with Annie E. Casey Foundation (AECF) representatives who then agreed to support this organizing effort with a seed grant for community organizing. SEND initiated the following process at the end of 2001 to determine the demand and level of desire for a neighborhood-based charter school:

A community organizer was secured to direct the community input process. Neighborhood residents, which included parents, an IPS teacher, and current SEND board members, stepped forward to help lead this effort. This **"Neighborhood Steering Committee"** gave direction to the organizer and SEND. The group discussed the initial concept with a broad group of contacts. In addition to attending area neighborhood association meetings, SEND hosted a series of four "education roundtables" throughout the neighborhood. One was a luncheon to target local business representatives and service providers interested in having more input in this project. Neighborhood residents facilitated the discussions; childcare, food and Spanish-translation were provided. A compiled list of over 125 interested individuals and groups resulted, many of whom have assisted in the development of the new school and remain engaged today. The SENSE effort has been one of the best-attended community initiatives for the neighborhood.

Early on, SENSE leaders began working with the **University Of Indianapolis Department of Education**<sup>11</sup> to develop a school curriculum that would best suit the young people in this neighborhood. Susan Zapach, Faculty member and Special Education Fellow with the Department, was selected to assist SENSE due to her specialization in literacy and urban students with exceptionalities. Ms. Zapach has led the development of the educational philosophy and program for SENSE and currently chairs the Education Committee.

In the second half of 2002, the **Board of Directors** was recruited. The board membership includes a diverse group of leaders that represent the neighborhood as well as those that bring important expertise and influence to this effort:

**Andrea L. Gilland, SENSE Founder and Board Chair:** Andrea Gilland is one of the original founders of SENSE. Professionally, Andrea Gilland is an Architect with Axis Architecture + Interiors. Andrea moved into the Fountain Square area six years ago and has been an active neighborhood resident ever since. Currently, Andrea serves in the following capacities: Board Member of Southeast Neighborhood Development (Past Chair) and Fountain Area Community Team (FACT), and as a Volunteer and Member of Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana, Historic Urban Neighborhoods of Indianapolis, and the Indianapolis Museum of Art.

**William G. Taft, SENSE Founder and Vice President:** William G. (Bill) Taft has served as the President of Southeast Neighborhood Development, Inc. (SEND) since 1991, and has guided its growth from total reorganization into one of the largest and most effective community development corporations in the region. SEND is heavily engaged in the development of affordable housing for home ownership, as well as commercial revitalization, youth development, and quality rental housing development. Since 1991, SEND has invested over \$25 Million into dramatically revitalizing the Greater Fountain Square Area of Indianapolis, renovating more than 150 affordable apartments, developing and selling 80 homes to first-time home owners, emergency repairs to over 500 homes, helping more than 50 neighborhood businesses expand, and teaching work and life ethics to more than 200

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<sup>10</sup> Previous to the passage of the Indiana Charter Law, the SEND board had also included the concept of a charter school in their Strategic Plan.

<sup>11</sup> The University of Indianapolis is a long-standing community partner of SEND and the neighborhood.

neighborhood youth. Bill is a member of the Greater Indianapolis Progress Committee, the Affordable Housing Advisory Council of the Federal Home Loan Bank of Indianapolis, the Indianapolis Neighborhood Housing Partnership, the Mayor's Housing Task Force, and the Indianapolis Housing Trust Fund. He holds a Masters from Ball State University College of Architecture and Planning. Bill lives in Indianapolis with his wife Joanna and three children. The Tafts were instrumental in the founding of the Oaks Academy, a parochial school in downtown Indianapolis.

**Rebecca Besser, SENSE Founder:** Rebecca (Becky) Besser is a homemaker, parent of school age children, IPS graduate, and lifetime resident of Fountain Square/Fletcher Place. Becky has been involved as a volunteer in a variety of neighborhood and community service projects including: Facilitator in the Annie E. Casey Family Circle Initiative, board member of the Key Learning Community School Committee, President of Manual High School PTSA, and member of Friends of Historic Fountain Square Neighborhood Association.

**Dustin Campbell, SENSE Founder:** Dustin Campbell is a Financial Analyst at Eli Lilly & Company, Inc. Prior to joining Lilly, Dustin spent three years as an Investment Banking Analyst and Associate with SunTrust Equitable Securities in Nashville, TN and Boston, MA. He is an active homeowner in the neighborhood and currently serves on the Boards of Directors for Southeast Neighborhood Development, Inc. and Fletcher Place Community Center, where he is the Treasurer. He earned a BS in Finance and International Studies at Indiana University.

**Rachel Cooper, SENSE Founder:** Rachel Cooper is a long-time neighborhood resident and community leader. Rachel began her community activist career in 1994. She now serves on the United Way Impact Council, The Greater Indianapolis Progress Committee (GIPC), the Community Court Planning Council and The City Wide Weed & Seed Board. She is also the President of the South East Community Organization (SECO) and Southeast Umbrella Organization (SUMO).

**Rosemily DeLeon Geyer, SENSE Treasurer/Secretary:** Rosemily is a Senior Tax Consultant at Ernst & Young in Indianapolis, Indiana. She graduated with a Bachelor of Business Administration in Accounting from The College of William and Mary. She is actively involved in community activities and boards. Rosemily's expertise and experience includes: first-generation Hispanic American, bilingual in Spanish, Project Management, Tax Strategic Planning, Account Billing, Client Management, and Forecasting/Trend Projection.

**Jerry L. Kent, Board Member:** Jerry Kent has a B.S. Degree in Elementary Education, a M.A. Degree in School Administration, and an Ed.S Degree in Administration and Supervision. He brings experience to SENSE as an elementary teacher, school business manager, and public school superintendent. In addition, Jerry is currently a member of the Rush County Council and very active in civic organizations. At the present, Jerry works in the southeast neighborhood and owns a successful business providing Real Estate Sales and Residential Construction Management through Kent Enterprises, Inc.

**Howard J. Lacy, Board Member:** Howard J. (HJ) Lacy has over fourteen years of experience teaching in the classroom at the elementary and junior high level. He is presently employed as the Technology Coordinator and Curriculum Coordinator at Park Tudor Lower School. HJ currently is serving in a variety of positions on several committees including: the Representative Chairperson of IAIS, a Tutor with Schools on Wheels, ISACS Professional Development, and the Representative Teacher at Park Tudor.

**Lee Lewellen, Board Member:** Lee Lewellen is Vice President of the Central Indiana Corporate Partnership, Inc., a coalition of central Indiana CEO's promoting growth and opportunity on a regional basis. Prior to joining the Central Indiana Corporate Partnership, Lee was with the Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce for fifteen years. His first position with the Chamber was as a program director for the Partners In Education program. In 1985, he became the small business coordinator for the Chamber, and in April 1988, he was named Director of Research and Member Services. In January 1998, Lee became Vice President for Public Policy with overall responsibility for the Chamber's government affairs, public policy, and community affairs activities. He is active and engaged in several philanthropic boards and also teaches classes at Notre Dame University. Lee has served in adjunct faculty positions at Ball State University, Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis, University of Indianapolis and Indiana University East, where he taught sociology and futurism. Additionally, he facilitates strategic planning and visioning sessions for a variety of organizations and small communities.

**Gilbert C. Liu, MD, Board Member:** Gil Liu is as a Pediatrician at James Whitcomb Riley Hospital for Children and Scientist at Indiana University in Indianapolis. He earned a Doctor of Medicine degree at the University of Mississippi School of Medicine and a Master of Science in Biomedical Engineering at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Gil is bilingual and a first-generation Asian American and has particular expertise in school-based health promotion, community health assessment, and educational evaluation. He is currently serving as a volunteer at the Indianapolis Trinity Free Clinic and serves on the board of National Institute for Fitness and Sport (NIFS).

**Mark J. Pflum, Board Member:** Mark Pflum is the President of the St Francis Healthcare Foundation, the development division of St Francis Hospital and Health Centers. Pflum is well known for his civic and philanthropic activities. He spent seven years with the Hudson Institute managing marketing, communications and development. He also worked closely with the Modern Red School House initiative during his tenure at Hudson. He was born in Fountain Square, grew up on the Southside and with his wife, raised his family on the south side.

**Kimberly A. Wize, Board Member:** Kimberly A. Wize is the Executive Director of the Indiana Housing Finance Authority. She was appointed to this position by Lt. Governor Joseph E. Kernan in 2000. She also serves as President and Chairman of the Indiana Equity Fund, Inc., an investment fund for affordable multi-family rental housing. Ms. Wize, a native of Illinois, joined IHFA as the Tax Credit Administrator after over four years with the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency. In addition to her duties as Executive Director, Ms. Wize is a board member for the National Council of State Housing Agencies (NCSHA) and the Consumer Credit Counseling Service of Central Indiana. She is also a member of the Indianapolis Housing Task Force. Ms. Wize is a graduate of Eastern Illinois University.

**Theresa Wood-Hoyt, SENSE Founder:** Theresa Wood-Hoyt is a neighborhood resident and parent of Indianapolis Public School (IPS) students. She grew up in the neighborhood and is the Director of the Fletcher Place Community Center's Adult Center for Education (ACE). In this capacity she works closely with numerous parents in the neighborhood, successfully training them in work force development and parenting skills.

**Susan Zapach, SENSE Board Member:** Susan Zapach holds a Master of Arts in Curriculum and Instruction and a Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education and Political Science. She has taught at the middle school and college levels and is currently a Faculty member of the Department of Education and the Special Education Fellow at the Center of Excellence in Leadership of Learning (CELL) with the University of Indianapolis. Ms. Zapach also acts as an advisor to the Dyslexia Institute.

### **Additional Support**

SENSE more recently secured a **Charter School Startup** and **Outreach Coordinator**. This position is held by, **Libby Pfeiffer**, who assists in facilitating the school planning efforts and communication with the board, committees, and the community. Libby is finishing her graduate degree in Cultural Anthropology at Ball State University. She is a parent, homeowner, and active resident in the neighborhood. Libby has previous work experience in community development at Southeast Neighborhood Development (SEND) and with youth at the Marion County Juvenile Detention Center. She has also served as an AmeriCorps volunteer at Improved Solutions for Urban Systems Charter School in Dayton, Ohio and the Peace and Learning Center in Indianapolis.



**Mary Ann Lochner, JD:** Through the Community Lawyering Project, Mary Ann Lochner, staff attorney with COLAP (Community Organizations Legal Assistance Project), is providing legal assistance for Southeast Neighborhood School of Excellence, Inc. Ms. Lochner brings a wealth of experience in corporate and nonprofit law and has assisted SENSE with incorporation and filing for Federal nonprofit status, as well as advising on issues relating to board development, composition and personnel.

**Rachel McIntosh:** Rachel is a Program Officer with Local Initiatives Support Corporation and has been providing assistance to SENSE since its early stages. LISC is a nonprofit support organization that helps community development organizations transform distressed neighborhoods by providing capital, technical expertise and training. Rachel is responsible for the capacity building program at LISC and works together with community organizations and charter schools to assist them with their organizational and project development. Previously, Rachel worked for SchoolStart, assisting Flanner House and the Charles A. Tindley Accelerated School with their startup phase.

Throughout the planning process, SENSE also benefited greatly from the **Annie E. Casey Foundation** in a number of ways including access to national technical assistance during the startup process and also through the provision of local workshops on charter and community schools. SENSE Board Members and staff attended these meetings and came away with a host of resources that have helped SENSE build its board and plan effectively. SENSE has also worked together with the **Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce, Hudson Institute, the Charter School Alliance,** and other local charter schools to gain technical assistance and advice. SENSE founders, volunteers and board members participated in site visits to charter schools in Indianapolis and Chicago. SENSE has remained in contact with all of these schools, particularly **21<sup>st</sup> Century** and the **Indiana Charter Services Center**, and has been able to access invaluable information.<sup>12</sup>

Lastly, the board is in the process of narrowing the pool of candidates and selecting the School Administrator for SENSE. This information will be made available to the Mayor's office when finalized.

### **III. Educational Services Provided**

#### **A. Educational Philosophy**

The SENSE school works from the premise that providing a strong educational foundation, and building students' fundamental academic skills at the early elementary grades will profoundly change the 'odds' for student success in higher grades and can shift student, family and community orientation towards educational attainment (acquisition of credentials), as a means for broadening individual and collective future opportunities. To accomplish this goal, the SENSE school will offer an environment that fosters a child's instinctual desire to learn, honoring the principle that every child can learn. The SENSE teaching philosophy is founded on the belief that early identification of student needs and strengths, implementation of programs to address those needs, and utilization of teaching strategies that have been proven to be effective with the most challenged students and with gifted and talented students will result in improved performance for **all** students in the classroom.

The southeastern community identified the value of academic excellence in core content areas, such as, reading, writing and math as the desired primary focus of the SENSE school. Responsive to this desire the SENSE Board identified materials and approaches consistent with this vision, studied research, and evaluated programs based upon their suitability to accomplish this goal. The Board also reviewed the success of these programs in schools with similar student bodies. In addition to the academic focus, parents and community members expressed a desire for a focus on social skills development. Finally the community expressed a desire for a program that could ensure that **all** students would be successful, including students with special needs.

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<sup>12</sup> At this time, SENSE would like to gratefully acknowledge the Charles A. Tindley Accelerated High School, 21<sup>st</sup> Century and Irvington Community School for assistance with information and formatting that was used in this prospectus.

The SENSE school will emphasize the development of a school culture that nurtures students and builds social skills. The taskforce volunteers and particularly the educators in the community lamented that any instruction would ultimately fail without first instilling these building blocks. In response, a framework for establishing school norms was identified by the neighborhood that fosters: *acceptance, strong social skills, self-discipline and self-actualization* (See SENSEabilities and SENSEitivity Principles in Attachment III). SENSE will adopt a school-wide program that will take a step-by-step approach to teach these skills beginning on day one and continuing until the day students graduate from SENSE, with the ultimate goal that the students will not only excel at school, but in all settings and environments.

## **B. Curriculum**

After review of various curricular and instructional approaches, the SENSE Board selected the Core Knowledge curriculum. Consistent with the expressed interest of the southeast community, Core Knowledge's mission is for the *"sake of academic excellence, greater fairness, and higher literacy."* Core Knowledge has shown that it can lift student scores by providing a solid, specific, and shared core curriculum grade by grade in order to help children establish strong foundations of knowledge necessary for higher levels of learning. It fosters excellence by improving student performance and vocabularies, boosting enthusiasm, and laying the groundwork for future learning. It promotes equity by ensuring that all students have the benefit of a rich, diverse curriculum and narrows the gap between high- and low-performing students, and the more and less disadvantaged.

The Core Knowledge curriculum sequence is founded on the premise that knowledge builds on knowledge. That is, children learn new knowledge by building on what they already know. The *Core Knowledge Sequence* provides a clear outline of content to be learned grade by grade. This sequential building of knowledge not only helps ensure that children enter each new grade ready to learn, but also helps prevent the many repetitions and gaps that characterize much current schooling. Literacy, broadly defined, also depends on shared knowledge. To be literate means, in part, to be familiar with a broad range of knowledge taken for granted by mainstream speakers and writers. Thus, Core Knowledge is designed not only to provide a strong academic program but also to foster comprehensive cultural literacy.

Because Core Knowledge is perceived as a 'classical education' model, the SENSE Board was very interested in understanding how effective the curriculum has been in schools with similar populations. The following examples provide compelling indications that this approach will be effective for SENSE students:

- *The Marlinton Elementary School, located in the Appalachian Mountains, transformed from a very low performing school to one of exceptional merit after adoption of Core Knowledge. Last year, Marlinton was awarded the West Virginia State School of Excellence.*
- *Sierra Grande Elementary School and Cesar Chavez Academy have both implemented Core Knowledge in their Kindergarten through 8th grade programs. Sierra Grande, with 80.3% at-risk and approximately 27% English Language Learners (both percentages based on 2001 statistics from Colorado Department of Education) implemented Core Knowledge in 2001. The schools third grade Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) reading scores jumped 40% in that one year, with 95% of its students rated as "Proficient" or "Advanced."*
- *Cesar Chavez Academy is a Core Knowledge charter school that opened in 2001. Sixty-six (66%) percent of the population at Cesar Chavez qualify for free and reduced lunch. Ethnicity statistics include a large Hispanic student population. In 2002, CSAP statistics for the school include third grade reading at 85% "Proficient" or "Advanced," and third grade writing at 74% "proficient" or better.*
- *Looking nationally, Nathaniel Hawthorne Elementary in Texas demonstrated dramatic results with Core Knowledge. Hawthorne's student population is 100% free and reduced lunch, and 40% bilingual. The results Hawthorne's students have achieved demonstrate that Core Knowledge can be a tremendous asset to*

*students living in high poverty and high immigrant areas. The school's 2001 scores on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills include: **Third Grade - English:** 71% achieved minimum expectations in Math, 69% in reading; **Fourth Grade - English:** 87% achieved minimum expectations in Math, 94% in reading; **Fifth Grade - English:** 100% achieved minimum expectations in Math, 100% in reading; **Third Grade - Spanish:** 80% achieved minimum expectations in Math, 80% in reading; **Fourth Grade - Spanish:** 86% achieved minimum expectations in Math, 71% in reading.*

It is anticipated that the Core Knowledge approach coupled with many best practices will help SENSE achieve similar rates of success. While Core Knowledge helps guide decisions about "what to teach," teachers and administrators still determine how to teach and can tailor the program to the population of the school in order to meet its needs. The program is designed to be flexible both in the instructional delivery of the curriculum and in terms of adjusting the curriculum for local schools. Some schools, for example, may chose to use 70% of the curriculum and adopt a compatible, but different curriculum for 30% of student instruction (e.g., using Foss Science in place of the science sequence.)

The Education Committee will recommend instructional methods and supplemental curricular material to ensure that SENSE students fully benefit from the educational program (See Committee Tasks Attachment IV). The committee will evaluate research, sample curriculum items, costs, professional development, success rates with similar populations, compatibility with the SENSE mission and vision, and compatibility with Indiana Standards. SENSE will develop a rubric that will include these issues as well as readability formulas.

### **Using the Community as a Laboratory for Learning**

As a neighborhood-based school, the SENSE board also places high priority on finding ways of infusing the local community context into the instructional activities of the school. This will include supplemental materials and the development of service learning projects that engage students in problem-solving community issues in partnership with area neighborhood associations and institutions. The SENSE curriculum will specialize in the appreciation of what makes a community - its cultural heritage and makeup, folklore, art and music, historical landmarks and neighborhoods. This will be accomplished through "hands on" learning that are both connected to the community, but also have authentic relevancy. For example, SENSE students will read historical articles written about the neighborhood and contribute articles to the neighborhood newspapers to strengthen their critical literacy skills. Teachers will use the Pioneer Family Fountain in the center of Fountain Square to teach students issues relating to westward bound settlers but also to demonstrate the significance of important neighborhood landmarks. These types of instructional methods also correlate to academic excellence and enthusiasm by utilizing the best and most effective teaching practices like discovery learning through experimentation. These instructional supplements are currently under development in the Community Sub-Committee (See Attachment V).

### **Instruction and Lesson Plans**

The Core Knowledge sequence will ultimately guide instruction at SENSE (See Attachment VI for the content, objectives and skills in the main subject areas by grade and examples of CK alignment with Indiana Standards). SENSE will purchase the curriculum materials recommended by the Core Knowledge Foundation and will complement these resources with carefully selected support materials. Students will receive instruction in language arts, math, science, geography, World and American history, and Spanish. Students will also receive instruction in art, physical education, wellness and music.

Well-designed lessons will be needed in order to accomplish this goal. Portions of a lesson are submitted below as a sample of one lesson plan from a unit developed with the Core Knowledge framework. Many unit plans like the one are available to be shared across Core Knowledge schools helping support instructors as they implement the curriculum.

Science

- K.1.2 Begin to demonstrate that everyone can do science
- K.4.2 Observe plants and animals, describing how they are alike and how they are different in the way they look and the things they do

**Unit: Animals and Their Needs**

**Lesson One: Animals are living creatures.**

\*\*\*Steps one & two introduced students to the lesson and involved showing the class both a stuffed and real rabbit and telling students to make observations about both.

Have the children come up in small groups and touch and look at the both rabbits. When everyone has had a chance to see the rabbit, return it to its cage and direct attention to the board. Write "living" and "nonliving" on the board. *Today you have looked at a living and a nonliving rabbit. Which rabbit was living? Which rabbit is not living? Let's see if we can figure out what makes the difference between living and nonliving creatures. I want you to tell me what you saw and felt when you examined the real rabbit.* List such characteristics as: has fur, moves, has two eyes, eats, wiggles its nose, feels warm, feel it breathing, tries to get away, and makes noises. You may want to put picture clues next to the words for the non-readers in the group. *Now, I want you to tell me about the stuffed rabbit.* List such characteristics as: has fur, does not move, has two eyes, does not move its nose, does not feel warm, cannot feel it breathing, stays in same place, and never makes a noise. K.1.2 & K.4.2

In conjunction with the Core Knowledge curriculum's recommendation that trade books, rather than solely texts, be used as instructional tools, leveled books and books in native tongues will be available for all students so that they can engage material that is accessible for them at their current level of functioning. This is especially significant for those students who are gifted and talented or who have mild and moderate handicaps. This strategy fosters a sense that we are all members of a learning community, yet instruction can be individualized to meet students where they are.

Clearly defined content knowledge and accommodations like the use of leveled texts, however, is not enough to give every child what s/he needs. Appropriate classroom teaching strategies to prevent or remediate deficits are also required. Prior to the start of the school year, all classroom teachers will receive instruction in selected teaching techniques like the Lindamood Phoneme Sequencing Program for the Teaching of Reading, Spelling, and Speaking and Visualization Verbalization for Reading Comprehension so that effective instruction that meets the needs of all learners can be delivered in the general education classroom ensuring students receive an appropriate yet individualized education.<sup>13</sup>

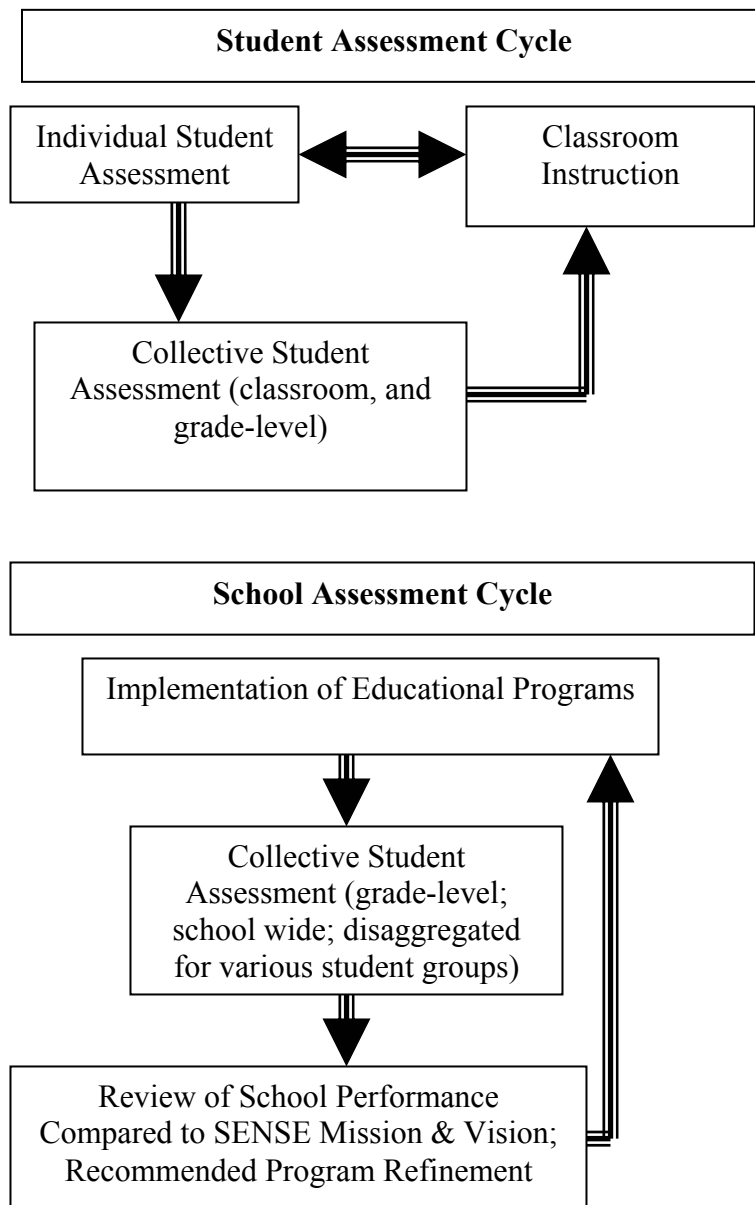
Parents will also play a key role in the classroom during crucial instructional times in order to work with teachers as they deliver small group instruction. For example, students identified as at-risk for reading failure in the primary grades will receive small group remedial instruction in the classroom before they fail to learn to read. Parent involvement and possibly cadet teachers will be a part of this process. This will allow parents the opportunity to play an important role in helping the school achieve its mission. (Also see Attachment V).<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> "Sensory-Cognitive Factors in the Controversy over Reading Instruction." *Journal of Developmental and Learning Disorder*, Volume 1, 1997, Number 1.

<sup>14</sup> *In the effective school, parents understand and support the school's basic mission and are given the opportunity to play an important role in helping the school achieve this mission. As outlined in the Correlates of Effective Schools: The First and Second Generation by Lawrence W. Lezotte.*

### C. Assessment

Assessment plays an important role at the SENSE school. Individual student assessment guides instructional decisions and will influence selection of curricular materials. On-going school-wide assessment across the year will be used to guide professional development decisions and adaptation of programs (e.g., adjusting after school enrichment programs to address specific academics needs should they arise on a school-wide basis). Annual school-wide assessment will also be used both for accountability and reporting requirements (to the sponsor, and to the Indiana Department of Education per Public Law 221, and to parents and the public) and for continuous school improvement efforts (identification of areas that might need programmatic adjustments or changes).



The SENSE school will use a variety of evaluation tools to measure student performance in areas set forth in the Goals Section (Academic Success, Academic Inclusion, and Academic Enthusiasm). Because the school places a strong emphasis on acquisition of strong reading skills by the third grade, the school has identified a specific early diagnostic tool to assist in identification of struggling readers and identification of specific needs. This assessment,

Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills<sup>15</sup> (DIBELS), will be administered to all new students at SENSE. SENSE will also use the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) Computerized Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), administered at least two times a year (as an annual pretest and post test) to measure student progress in Reading/Language Arts and Math. The NWEA will be used to measure individual student gains, identified sub-groups of students gains (e.g., the average performance of students receiving special services), class level and school-wide gains. SENSE will also participate in annual ISTEP testing as part of the IDOE state accountability program. The performance on ISTEP will allow for comparisons, in terms of student performance, to similar schools.

To measure academic progress in core subject areas the classroom teachers will use alternative assessments to document student acquisition of the Indiana Academic Standards for each grade level. Finally, SENSE will use preexisting, or will develop customized evaluation tools, to assess classroom behaviors. These may include classroom observations, interviews, surveys, samples of student work, portfolios, etc. These (yet to be defined) evaluation instruments will be used to develop ways to quantifiably measure “Academic Enthusiasm”, as defined in the Goals Section of this Prospectus.

## **STUDENT ASSESSMENT**

### Academic Success:

Students will acquire and demonstrate continued growth in core areas of reading and math. Each student will demonstrate consistent growth in reading/language arts and math. Because students may enter the school “below”, or “at or above grade-level”, two sets of benchmarks are being used:

- a) Students pre-testing below grade level will close the size of the achievement gap (the distance between current performance and current grade-level) each year, until performing at or above grade level. Some students entering SENSE at Kindergarten or First Grade may not have pre-literacy skills. These students, providing two or more consecutive years in attendance at SENSE, should close the “achievement gap” by third grade. Students entering SENSE in later grades should close the gap after two consecutive years in attendance.
- b) Students pretesting at or above grade level will demonstrate, at the minimum, a full grade level of growth per academic year in attendance at SENSE.

Students will also demonstrate proficiency on the Indiana Academic Standards in each of the core subject areas (Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Studies).

*Measurement:* Teachers will collect samples of student work (e.g., writing samples, papers, projects, tests, etc.) that demonstrate proficiency on each standard. Student work in all subject areas will be collected across each school year in a portfolio, with a teacher developed summary report to quantify student demonstration of standard skills. These portfolios will be maintained across grades, so that student performance and growth across their “career” at SENSE is well documented. For each student, the end of the year report will include a review of the number of standards met and will provide benchmarks for future years (e.g., if a student meets 10/12 sub-standards in an area, this information tells the next teacher what areas to review with the student to meet those standards, and sets the benchmark for a higher ratio of demonstrated mastery of sub-standards across the next academic year). Each year students will increase their total “score” by at least 10% until demonstrating full mastery at each grade level.

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<sup>15</sup> The test initially measures each of the building blocks of successful reading including: word use fluency, initial sound fluency, letter naming fluency, phoneme segmentation fluency, nonsense word fluency, retell fluency, and oral reading fluency for children in kindergarten through grade three. Each subtest takes under ten minutes and is administered at appropriate grade levels. For example, kindergartners are tested in initial sound fluency and phoneme segmentation fluency while first graders are assessed in nonsense word fluency and oral reading fluency. The results of the test are available immediately and identify students who would benefit from targeted remediation. DIBELS results are maintained by the University of Oregon and allow for documenting each child's individual growth. A correlation between successful mastery of the skills assessed by DIBELS and success of statewide reading assessments has been demonstrated.

### **Academic Inclusion**

Students receiving special services (e.g., academic, linguistic) will make comparable academic progress to their grade-level peers.

*Measurement:* NWEA test scores, and ISTEP scores after ISTEP begins annual testing grades 3-8.

Students receiving special services will demonstrate a comparable size “gain” in academic growth to the average gain of students in the same grade who are not receiving special services. For example if third graders, on average, made a 1.3 level gain across a single academic year, each student receiving special services would meet this goal if they also demonstrate a 1.3 level gain. Annual grade level pass-rates and scores improvements on the future ISTEP tests, will also be compared to the pass rates and scores of students receiving special services.

### **SCHOOL ASSESSMENT:**

Individual student data on each of the Student Assessment indicators is aggregated across grade levels (e.g., average for third graders). On some indicators the data may also be disaggregated for specific groups of students (e.g., students receiving special services), or may be aggregated across the entire school.

### **Academic Success:**

Third grade students, who have attended SENSE for two or more consecutive years, will on average test at or above grade level in reading and math. Students who enter SENSE after the first grade will, on average, test at or above grade level after two consecutive years of enrollment at SENSE.

*Measurement:* NWEA test scores reported by grade level in reading and math. The first year, beginning of the year NWEA test scores will be averaged for each grade level, and among specified sub-groups of students (e.g., students receiving special services) to give a ‘benchmark’ for future years. Each grade level will demonstrate, at a minimum, an increase in the rate of students performing at or above grade level, by 10% compared to the previous year, until the percentage of students are performing at or above grade level exceeds the rate at comparable schools. ISTEP pass rates reported by grade level (initially at 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades, later in 3<sup>rd</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grades). The SENSE students ISTEP pass-rates in the first year (the test is administered in the beginning of the year upon student enrollment) will be used as the benchmark for future years. The pass-rates for each class will increase at least by 10% compared to the previous years’ pass-rates until the pass-rate is equal to or exceeds the state average.

Students will demonstrate proficiency on the Indiana Academic Standards in each of the core subject areas (Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Studies).

*Measurement:* The data collected (described in Student Assessment section) and quantified will be aggregated across each grade-level to establish benchmarks for future years. The school expects annual increases on these measures, though the size for targeted gains will depend upon the benchmarked levels. The data will both be analyzed to compare different groups of students at the same grade level (e.g., 2004-05 third graders to 2005-06 third graders), and to compare the progress of a cohort of students as the progress through the grades (e.g., 2004-05 third graders, 2005-06 fourth graders).

### **Academic Inclusion**

On Average students receiving special services will demonstrate the same size of academic gains in reading and math as their grade-level peers.

*Measurement:* NWEA reading and math scores. The average “gains” across the year (beginning of the year test compared to the end of the year test) will be measured for students not receiving special services at each grade level. The average “gain” in each subject area will be compared to the average “gain” of

special needs students in that grade level. Note that this measurement may not always be reliable at each grade level due to a small sample size in a specific grade. To look across the school as a whole, the ISTEP pass-rates for students receiving special services will be used to demonstrate improvement across years. The first year ISTEP scores in third and sixth grades will be used as a benchmark for future years, with anticipated increases in the pass-rate each year.

## **D. Special Student Populations**

### **English as a New Language**

The Southeast neighborhood is home to one of the fastest growing Spanish speaking populations in Indianapolis. Out of the community's desire for inclusiveness has arisen a vision for all SENSE students and parents of the school to acquire second language skills. The vision is for students to learn one another's language while continuing to develop their own language skills. Encouraging research shows that language skills in one's native tongue transfers to the learning of second language. For example, joint research conducted by the Center of Applied Linguistics, Harvard University, and John Hopkins University in 2001 entitled, "The Transfer of Skills from Spanish to English: A Study of Young Learners," found that providing literacy instruction in Spanish to Spanish speaking, English language learners helped students acquire literacy skills in English and enabled them to use their native language well. Options being explored to achieve this goal is the securing of a staff member who is bilingual and can serve as a resource and instructor, the use of a computer-based language program like Ellis Language Software, and finally, the employment of parents and volunteers from the community who speak both English and Spanish and can offer incidental exposure to students from Kindergarten through grade five.<sup>16</sup>

### **Special Education**

The needs of exceptional learners were considered at every stage of the decision making from staffing to playground design concepts. The curriculum committee operated under the guiding principle that most children can be successfully served in the general education classroom if time is allocated in the schedule to allow for collaboration, if support systems like coordinated volunteers are in place, teachers are properly trained, appropriate teaching strategies are employed, and appropriate classroom materials are utilized. The committee also operated from the understanding that success cannot be solely measured by the top group of students who typically would thrive under any instructional program. Success is more accurately measured by the growth of students who are "school dependent." Fortunately, there is research to support the contention that strategies that positively affect the growth of both student populations also can increase the achievement of special needs students at greater rates, helping to close the "achievement gap."<sup>17</sup>

Teachers will be empowered for inclusion. 'Empowered inclusion' is a correlate of Effective Schools where "staff members believe and demonstrate that all students can attain mastery of the essential school skills, and that the staff members also believe they have the capability to help all students achieve such mastery."<sup>18</sup> SENSE will be a school where these are not just beliefs – but are reality. This will be accomplished not only because teachers are given the tools and support to help all children succeed, but also because general educators will begin to include strategies that are effective in both the general and special education setting.

While special education can be costly, the overall design of SENSE has been focused on successfully and efficiently meeting the needs of exceptional learners. SENSE will be a school that utilizes the best of general and special education in the general education classroom to the greatest extent appropriate, helping to limit the amount of

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<sup>16</sup> SENSE preference is to hire a full-time bilingual Hispanic American. In the event that applicants cannot be secured, then the school will evaluate programs like the Ellis Language Software. In conversations with local service providers, it has become evident that there is a small pool of individuals certified to teach Spanish in Indianapolis. Often-times individuals are recruited from out-of-state.

<sup>17</sup> Several examples of the ability of intervention and remedial approaches to close achievement gaps are documented in, "Sensory-Cognitive Factors in the Controversy over Reading Instruction" by Patricia Lindamood, Nanci Bell, and Phyllis Lindamood. *The Journal of Developmental and Learning Disorders*, Vol. 1, No. 2; 1997.

<sup>18</sup> As outlined in the *Correlates of Effective Schools: The First and Second Generation* by Lawrence W. Lezotte.



specialized instruction required in a more costly setting. Early identification, using the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Literacy Skills (DIBELS), and remediation of at-risk students are in place to help catch struggling students before they fail to read. This will save children the emotional trauma associated with reading failure and will save the school the financial burden of more costly intervention programs for students that traditionally serve students after they have experienced two or more years of reading failure.

It is anticipated that the number of students who are misidentified as having a learning disability, when in actuality they have experienced iatrogenic reading failure (reading failure caused by improper teaching), will be eliminated and that special education services in the area of reading will only need to be delivered to the 5% of the population that is truly dyslexic. The incorporation of leveled texts also allows most students to be serviced in the general education classroom along with a plan for incorporating parents as learning assistants during critical instruction times.

The needs of exceptional learners will be met through traditional and creative means. SENSE plans to access the resources of the Special Education Cooperative and will have a licensed special education professional as a member of the staff. This individual will provide remediation and support to students and classroom teachers. It is envisioned that the special education professional will serve as a key figure in the professional development of the school's staff, helping to provide training in instructional approaches like the Lindamood-Phoneme Sequencing Program for Reading, Spelling, and Speech (LiPS). The LiPS approach was selected because of its appropriateness and effectiveness in helping all children achieve greater rates of success and because of the evidence that reading instruction using this approach in the early grades reduces the need for special education services.

The school will comply with all federal and state requirements in relation to special education and will provide every student identified with a disability an Individual Education Plan (IEP), specifying goals, levels of placement, ancillary services and least restrictive placement.

#### **IV. Organizational Viability and Effectiveness**

##### **A. Enrollment/Demand**

SENSE grew directly out of parental and community demand for this school and is the result of a neighborhood stepping forward to make a charter option possible. This sole fact promises high sustainability and participation rates that most other charters schools have to work hard to establish. The demand for the school was further assessed through the community input process and interviews with area parents and community organizations as discussed above. The neighborhood felt strongly that the need and demand far exceeded what a small neighborhood school could orchestrate for the neighborhood, but was the best place to start.

Below is the enrollment plan for each year. SENSE's intention is to open in the fall of 2004.

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>Grade Levels</b>	<b>Total Student Enrollment</b>
First Year	K – 3	160
Second Year	K – 4	200
Third Year	K – 5	240
Fourth Year	K – 5	240
Fifth Year	K – 5	240
Sixth Year	K – 5	240
Seventh Year	K – 5	240
<b>Maximum</b>	<b>K – 5</b>	<b>240</b>

SENSE will begin with a manageable size for startup (offering K – 3 in year one) and add two more classes for each grade annually, but will always remain committed to being small. SENSE founders voted that the maximum student enrollment (240) would not exceed the National Small Schools Movement definition (less than 300 in total), yet large

enough to sustain operations. Also in direct response to the community input, the board determined that SENSE would keep class size low and not exceed two classes per grade at any given time. This will ensure a more personal learning environment. It is projected that SENSE will have full enrollment and waiting lists. Students that enroll in the first years (K – 3) will move to fourth and fifth grades respectively.

### **Recruitment and Enrollment**

SENSE is well positioned with a solid network of support organizations poised and ready to recruit families in an effective and very personal manner.<sup>19</sup> SENSE's network is wide, diverse and multicultural in scope and will ensure that all families have the opportunity to choose SENSE as a possible option for their child. For example, the Lilly Boys & Girls Club and Girls Incorporated have committed to host neighborhood events that will attract families and then allow SENSE Representatives a time to explain the mission and vision of SENSE. Volunteers will be on hand to help parents fill out applications. Other SENSE volunteers have committed to meeting with their neighbors to encourage participation, foster greater understanding of what a charter school offers, build understanding and assist them in signing up.<sup>20</sup> The Community Sub-Committee that consists of neighborhood activists planned the recruitment process after interviewing and visiting two community-based charter schools, Flanner Elementary and Irvington Community School. Similar to the Irvington model, the SENSE recruitment process will saturate southeast families with information about the school. This will include postings in community newspapers, fliers placed at homes and area businesses, presentations at Preschools and Adult Training Centers, and so on. Promotional materials will be created for low-level readers and accessible in languages other than English.

In addition, SENSE applications will be on the SENSE website ([www.sendcdc.org/sense](http://www.sendcdc.org/sense)) and other charter-related websites to ensure that all families with interest, even those outside of the area, will have equal opportunity to apply. SENSE recognizes that it is important to recruit families from throughout Indianapolis to bring important variety and differing perspectives to the school. While the primary target will be at-risk and low income families on the southeast side, the board is also committed to diversifying the applicant pool with mixed incomes to bring diversity in this way as well. However, SENSE does not and shall not discriminate against any student, teacher or employee on the basis of race, color, gender, disability, religion, ancestry, or national or ethnic origin. The Corporation will admit students of any race, color, gender, ancestry, and national or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school, and does not and shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender, disability, religion, ancestry, or national or ethnic origin in the administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic or other school-administered programs.

### **B. Governance and Management**

The Southeast Neighborhood School of Excellence, Inc. is incorporated as a not-for-profit organization with the State of Indiana and is currently awaiting federal 501(c) 3 designation (See Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, Organizational Chart in Attachments II and VII). The control and management of the business and affairs of SENSE are vested in the board of directors. The board of directors and its individual members are charged with upholding and overseeing fulfillment of the mission and purpose of the Southeast Neighborhood School of Excellence. The SENSE board members are the critical volunteer leadership of the organization and as such, commit to the following:

- Ensure effective long-term business and organizational planning
- Manage resources effectively
- Monitor educational programs and services, ensuring alignment with overall goals and steady progression towards the school accountability plan
- Enhance the school's image within the board and in the community

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<sup>19</sup> See support letters

<sup>20</sup> SENSE volunteers consist of a diverse representation of Indianapolis as a whole and the various neighborhoods within the larger southeast catchment area.

- Determine and set overall policies and procedures
- Support the organization financially <sup>21</sup>
- Take initiative in connecting the organization with opportunities for funding
- Provide candid feedback and evaluation of the organization
- Select, support and evaluate the School Executive
- Act in the best interest of the school at all times <sup>22</sup>

### **Board Policy**

The SENSE Board of Directors will set policy by focusing primarily on desired results and outcomes, the needs of the students and community, and the costs of service delivery. However, the Board will be sensitive not to micromanage. The Board of Directors will continuously evaluate the activities and performance of the school administrator and staff within the bounds of the established policy goals and objectives described above. Currently the board is developing the following: Human Resource Policies, Admission Policies, Dress Code and Student Discipline Policy.

### **Board Composition**

A Board of Directors made up of a diverse representation of corporate and nonprofit executives, educators and local residents currently governs SENSE. The number of Directors shall be neither fewer than three (3) nor more than seventeen (17) at any given time. Directors of the Corporation will hold office for a term of three years and qualified successors will be identified and elected. Consistent with the SENSE mission and vision, at least one-third (1/3) of the Directors at all times shall be individuals who reside, work or worship in the Southeast Neighborhood. Upon commencement of school operations, the SENSE board is committed to including at least one parent of a child enrolled in the school.

### **Board Recruitment**

The Governance Committee will recruit, screen and evaluate the qualifications of prospective board nominees prior to any recommendations made to the full Board for action. SENSE will continuously seek diverse board members in the areas of expertise currently represented: business and nonprofit management, educational policy, fundraising, law, assessment, strategic planning, human resources, community development, neighborhood organizing, curriculum instruction and workforce development. Recruitment will be an ongoing process and commence each year at least three months prior to the annual meeting at which board members are elected. Prospective nominees will begin by providing a resume to the Governance Committee followed by an interview. References will be confirmed and all elected Board Members will agree to criminal background checks as required by law.

### **Board Development**

SENSE will hold an annual board retreat each year to orient new board members and to generate the annual business and strategic plans. Each year, SENSE will also work with a facilitator or consultant to train the board on issues of governance, resource development and to assist with the strategic plan and visioning. <sup>23</sup>

### **Committee Structure**

Additionally, SENSE shall maintain committees to serve in an advisory capacity to the Board of Directors regarding the business and affairs to which they have been delegated responsibility. Decisions requiring significant oversight, discussion and research will first be reviewed and deliberated in its respective committee before coming to the Board for final action. Committee membership will consist of Board members and additional volunteers that bring the necessary expertise to evaluate the issues overseen by that particular committee (See Attachment IV for full listing of committees and their specific duties).

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<sup>21</sup> The first board campaign is already underway and has achieved 100% financial participation from every board member

<sup>22</sup> Also refer to the by-laws for a more thorough outline of duties

<sup>23</sup> SENSE envisions working together with graduate students of the Indiana University Center on Philanthropy to help provide this service.

### **Staff Roles and Descriptions**

The lead staff of SENSE will include the School Administrator and Educational Program Director. These two individuals will work closely to ensure the success of the school:

The **School Administrator**, reporting directly to the board, will oversee SENSE with direct supervision of the fiscal operation, organizational management and employment matters. This includes the following: 1) Promoting, motivating and maintaining a productive, creative and caring atmosphere in which every student, parent and educator can experience success; 2) Fostering an environment where students and staff are challenged to reach their greatest potential; 3) Securing and compiling data to determine if the vision, mission, goals and outcome objectives are being met. Additionally, the Administrator will:

- Be responsible for every aspect of the charter school operation and is the primary facilitator of the school's success, quality and character
- Establish a school culture based on caring, concern, trust and support for all students enrolled, a culture that adapts to the special needs of urban families and students
- Establish an educational culture based on caring, concern, trust support for all educators and staff
- Insures that the ideas, people and processes needed to make the charter school a meaningful and effective educational experience are in place and operating at the highest level of standards
- Responsible for the development of strong relationships with the media, community partners, business partners, volunteers, other administrators, funders, and the chartering authority
- Responsible for the reporting, compliance and evaluation
- Responsible for implementing the accountability plan
- Responsible for hiring and evaluating all personnel, consultants and vendors including transportation arrangements
- Responsible for all day-to-day decision-making, financial transactions, purchase orders, documentation, and information requests from the sponsor
- Responsible for personnel scheduling and benefits acquisition
- Responsible for implementing the Fund Development plan in partnership with the Board of Directors

The **Educational Program Director** facilitates the SENSE learning community with the continuous improvement of curriculum and instructional strategies and educational programs aligned with the SENSE mission, objectives and framework; will report to the School Administrator. More specifically, the director will:

- Have responsibility over the educational program of SENSE
- Assist in the ongoing design, coordination, implementation and evaluation of the SENSE instructional program
- Assist with teacher supervision and evaluation
- Oversee professional development program
- Support and coach teachers in using curriculum
- Consult with the Education Committee on curriculum instruction and assessment matters
- Direct the courses of study, guides, and teaching techniques for appropriate grade levels
- Facilitate evaluation activities and prepare evaluation reports and presentations
- Maintain current information on state and federal education legislation and regulations
- Research possible funding sources for educational programs; disseminate funding proposal information to administration, and write grant proposals as necessary
- Perform related duties as assigned

### **Educational Instructors**

Instructors will be responsible for implementing the curriculum, coordinating with volunteer instructional assistants, maintaining current achievement level information, working closely with all students with special attention given to lower achievers, keeping accurate and concise records, establishing personal classroom procedures, ordering teaching materials and maintaining relationships with parents. Teachers will be required to assist with extra-curricular programs on a rotating basis and be available for parental inquiries at all times. Mandatory home visits will be required annually for each family. SENSE will meet all legal requirements regarding certified staff and will make every effort to employ faculty that represent the neighborhood and the diversity of the school population.

### **Selection Criteria**

The staff selection process for SENSE will look for individuals with the personal characteristics which promote collaboration and team building and that are:

- Student and family centered, patient, supportive, compassionate, enthusiastic, flexible, positive attitude, generous, hardworking, and dedicated
- Committed to educational reform and quality education
- Possess a heart for community work and a personal commitment to helping families increase their quality of life and be intricately engaged at SENSE
- Believe that all children are gifted and can excel
- Knowledgeable about the needs of various special and urban populations, direct experience or personal connection with the Southeast neighborhood highly preferred

### **C. Budget and Financial Matters**

The six-year projected budget (including one year of pre-opening operations and a cash flow analysis for year-one will be found in Attachment VIII) includes the summary of expected revenues and expenditures associated with the start-up and first five years of operational costs for SENSE. In addition, some costs associated with the school's startup, such as professional development for faculty and staff, occur in the first operating fiscal year. Following the budget are details about the major assumptions used for projecting revenues and expenditure. It should be noted that SENSE intends to open with grades K-3 and will add additional grades in the second and in the third years of operation, thus becoming a full K-5 elementary school. This clearly impacts the revenue projections that are based on the number of students served. Additionally, there will be variable expense calculations that will also correspond to the number of students enrolled.

The SENSE Finance and Facilities Committee will continue to modify and refine the school's business plan as necessary to reflect changes in the legislative environment, private funding and enrollment data. We have included projections for costs associated with the start-up of SENSE (fiscal year ending June 30, 2004) as well as five years of operating expenses (fiscal years ending June 30, 2005-2009). The committee is focused on three main types of funding sources: private and public grants, private donations, and public (local/state/federal) per pupil funding and categorical funding. As with any organization, financial planning and management will be critical to the success of SENSE. While SENSE has budgeted for private fundraising each year and has a fundraising plan for the next five years, the Finance and Facilities committee has ensured (primarily through resourceful negotiations with SEND on the facility), that in the event that the funds are not raised, the school will be able to continue meeting its mission and providing comprehensive services.

Currently, the sponsoring organization, Southeast Neighborhood Development, serves as the fiscal agent for SENSE. SEND has a proven track record in managing multi-million dollar project budgets and maintains a very healthy nonprofit financial rating as rated by their funders and lenders in Indianapolis. SENSE intends to continue the contractual relationship with SEND for fiscal management through the first year of operation at a minimum (currently this is provided as an in-kind service).

### **D. Transportation**

SENSE will ensure that transportation will not be a barrier for any child or family enrolled and has budgeted accordingly for a transportation program to ensure commitment to this statement.<sup>24</sup> After the student body has been determined, the school will create a transportation plan to meet the needs of eligible students. This plan will guarantee that all students in need of transportation assistance will be provided for. We anticipate that a large portion of students will come from the near south and east sides of Indianapolis and will, therefore, not have a need for extensive amounts of assistance. However, for those students requiring assistance (including those with special needs), SENSE's transportation plan will rely on a variety of methods to aid students in getting to and from school. These may include contracting with local transportation vendor(s), partnering with area charter schools, and working with the local school board where appropriate and/or possible.<sup>25</sup>

Additionally, the SENSE administration and staff will work together with parents to facilitate a carpooling system for the school day and extra-curricular programming. This approach has worked well for other charter schools when a deliberate commitment is made to from staff to aid this process. Teachers at SENSE may also be asked to help with transportation needs where such a request is deemed reasonable. Each operator of a designated pupil transportation vehicle will hold a valid driver's license- class A, B or C, have a clean record of safety, have received an annual physical within 60 days of operating the vehicle, and participated in the Department of Education's driver education program. SENSE will ensure that students will regularly receive instruction in emergency evacuation and safe riding on school buses. SENSE will not exceed the manufacturer's rated seated capacity by more than the legal 120%.

SENSE at a minimum will purchase the following auto liability insurance:

- \$1,000,000 per person
- \$5,000,000 each accident
- \$50,000 property damage
- \$5,000 medical/death payment

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<sup>24</sup> Budget projections were based on discussions and comparisons with local charter school programs. SENSE Charter Organizer verified with the City of Indianapolis and Indianapolis Public Schools that the SENSE location and the Southeast Neighborhood was not located in a transfer area affected by the Desegregation laws.

<sup>25</sup> Discussions with 21<sup>st</sup> Century regarding a shared transportation program have already begun (a fee-for-service arrangement).